

Department of Labor and Industrial Relations

The department was able to persuade the legislature to remove anti-business sections from the majority party's "ice" bill. The original language suggested that employers were partly responsible for the "ice" epidemic, and mandated that they give anti-substance abuse training to employees and provide health care coverage to individuals fired for illicit drug use.

Employers who violated portions of those provisions would have faced prison sentences. The department agreed to provide an online substance abuse class for employers and employees in exchange for the legislature modifying the bill.

The department also drafted a sweeping omnibus bill meant to reform the state's workers' compensation system and reduce costs for the state and Hawai'i's employers. The legislature was unwilling to move on any substantive reform, and the one measure that passed was amended, so instead of providing the Insurance Commissioner with authority to investigate workers comp fraud by employees, the bill now allows the commissioner to investigate . . . the insurance companies and self-insured employers for fraud. This Administration will carefully review this bill before taking action on it.

- Nelson Befitel, Director